

## **211-03 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES**

### **03-01 Introduction**

The *Economic Development Strategy*, which this document replaces, sets forth an overall economic development goal as clear and relevant today as it was when proposed in 1986. That goal is:

*To foster and maintain a vigorous economy able to provide an adequate number and variety of activities that generates wealth for the people of the state.*

In arriving at that one goal, the Statewide Planning Program analyzed many studies of and statements about the area's economy from diverse sources. These include the New England Regional Commission, Rhode Island Governors, the Rhode Island General Assembly, the Strategic Development Commission, the land use element of the State Guide Plan, and citizen input from 1,300 questionnaires. Economic development objectives were identified that for the most part were broad in nature and designed to establish public investment priorities that were economically and socially cost-effective in the long term. These objectives and policies reflected a consensus among economic development practitioners in both the public and private sectors.

For this update, staff reviewed the issues in all of the economic development plans written since 1968 and found, for the most part, that the same issues exist today. Drafts of the "Issues" section of this document were sent to economic development practitioners outside of state government for their comments. Senior staff from the Statewide Planning Program participated in several brainstorming sessions to revise the original objectives and policies. The modified policies and objectives then were sent to the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation for their review, and further changes were made based on the comments that they returned.

From the staff's own research and the reaction of others, it appears that the consensus reached in 1986 has, with very minor variation, held today. The objectives and policies have been revised, but still address the same shortcomings that were recognized nearly 15 years ago.

The objectives and policies outlined here are intended to guide public investment toward the fulfillment of the overall economic development goal. They provide a foundation for action that encompasses related social, physical, and environmental factors to be considered in setting directions for economic development. Within this broad context, they must be used in conjunction with the goals, objectives, and policies set forth in all State Guide Plan elements in order to achieve balanced development.

## **03-02 Objectives and Policies**

### **03-02-01 OBJECTIVE A: EMPLOYMENT**

*Provide at least 34,200 new employment opportunities for Rhode Island residents, by the year 2020, achieving and maintaining full employment and reducing underemployment.\**

Policies to Achieve Objective A:

1. Improve opportunities for productive employment with highest priority given to those economic development activities that have the potential to upgrade the skill and wage levels of the state's resident labor force. Target public economic development assistance of any type to those applicants that can increase the average wage rate in their industrial sectors.
2. Promote expansion and recruitment of industries that offer career opportunities for both our secondary and post-secondary school graduates.
3. Encourage and expand those social services, both in the public and private sector, that are necessary to facilitate the broadest labor force participation, including training, job placement, child care, health care, and transportation services.
4. Promote and develop the use of mass transit in order to eliminate spatial barriers to employment opportunities. Encourage development in densities high enough to facilitate the economical provision of mass transit.
5. Emphasize diversity of industry toward those sectors that demonstrate a steady employment pattern, avoid seasonal layoffs, and withstand cyclical downturns of the economy.
6. Expand educational and job-training opportunities that have as their primary objective providing the state's labor force with those marketable skills sought by employers that provide above average wage rates. Provide lifelong training and education opportunities that make the labor force competitive.
7. Eliminate barriers to employment based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin through education and training as well as consistent enforcement of applicable laws.
8. Encourage communities to plan for and accommodate the socioeconomic impacts of industrial and commercial development, such as by providing a variety of housing options to meet the needs of the local labor force.
9. Encourage industry, particularly those that employ urban populations, to locate in urban areas and to take advantage of public and alternative transportation modes where feasible.

\*See note ((61))

- **03-02-02 OBJECTIVE B: FACILITIES**

*Work with economic development practitioners to encourage sustainable industrial and commercial development that advances the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the state, and is consistent with the State Land Use Policies and Plan, the Industrial Land Use Plan, and other applicable elements of the State Guide Plan.*

Policies to Achieve Objective B:

1. Reclaim brownfields by environmental remediation and encourage use of the “built environment.”
2. Conserve and enhance desirable existing industrial areas, office complexes, and concentrations of service activities to maximize the investment and utilization of existing infrastructure. New or expanded public sewer and water services and highways should be provided to industrial and commercial development only where such development is appropriate in terms of the natural constraints imposed by the land, air, and water in the immediate vicinity of such development, and where the area is being developed at an intensity that is consistent with state land use policy, and when such development will not promote wasteful use of resources. When possible, an industry’s needs should be matched with the appropriate site in order to maximize the return on the infrastructure investment.
3. Ensure adequate investment to maintain and improve a balanced, intermodal transportation system that meets the needs of the state’s commerce and labor force. Make the transit system and intermodal connections user-friendly for all members of the riding public. Maintain shipping channels and recognize the economic potential of T. F. Green Airport and other state airports.
4. Encourage higher densities, mixed uses, careful design, transit and pedestrian-friendly land use and development patterns, and location near existing hubs and corridors to avoid “sprawl.” Maximize the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycling, walking, and mass transit.
5. Relate industrial and commercial development to overall land use by promoting the use of development controls and performance standards that mitigate conflicts with other land uses and activities.
6. Encourage investment by the public and private sectors that will stabilize and improve housing and commerce in deteriorating urban areas.
7. Promote the control of land development along arterial highways in order to preserve their functional integrity, capacity, safety, and appearance.

8. Contribute to the stabilization and redevelopment of central business districts through the provision of supporting services such as transportation access, parking, utilities, and police and fire protection, as well as the adaptive reuse of historic buildings that contribute to the commercial and cultural economic base of these areas. Public subsidy enticements to industries other than traded industries should only be considered where they contribute to the stabilization and redevelopment of such areas. Viable economic reuses should be found for historic buildings that can contribute to the economy.
9. Designate sites in developing communities and in or near smaller urban centers in rural communities for industrial or commercial development as needed to meet state and municipal economic objectives. Select locations with natural characteristics favorable for economic development that have or can be supplied with the public facilities and services necessary to support the type of economic activity planned, and that are readily accessible to a labor force. These locations must also be consistent with the general development patterns set forth in the state land use policies and plan element and with all other applicable elements or provisions of the State Guide Plan. Sites selected, and the economic activities that use these sites, should be compatible with the scale, historic character, and other aspects of the surrounding community.
10. Locate industrial development causing other than domestic waste discharges in areas served either by public sewerage systems or by appropriately permitted and maintained private systems.
11. Support agricultural base to include turf, ornamentals, vineyards, forestry, field crops, dairy and livestock. Seek alternative niche markets to support smaller, more diverse farms. Promote the preservation of prime farmland and provide the technical support to keep agriculture environmentally and economically sustainable.
12. Encourage development of sport and commercial fisheries both inshore and offshore up to levels of maximum sustainable yield by supporting the provision of appropriate infrastructure, research and training facilities, aquaculture, management activities, and enforcement of water quality standards. Reserve suitable port access areas for commercial fishing vessels.
13. Encourage new industrial development in the coastal zone that places a priority on the maximum efficient and appropriate utilization of existing marine infrastructure, such as the Port of Providence and Quonset Davisville.
14. Encourage areas used for commercial development to be selected and configured to make the most efficient use of scarce shoreline locations.
15. Promote tourism as a major industry, and encourage and support the use of the wide range of facilities that make up the industry's infrastructure.
16. Encourage the reuse of industrial land as industrial land to the maximum extent feasible.



Barrington Yacht Club (foreground); Warren Waterfront (background)

### **03-02-03 OBJECTIVE C: CLIMATE**

*Maintain a business environment conducive to the birth, sustenance, and growth of suitable industry and commerce.*

Policies to Achieve Objective C:

1. Promote the implementation of a growth development strategy giving priority to economic development programs directed at the promotion, maintenance, and expansion of existing firms.
2. Encourage and promote locally and regionally initiated economic development efforts as set forth in the economic development elements of local comprehensive plans.
3. Attract and give assistance to those types of industry that best capitalize on Rhode Island's strengths, and are potentially most beneficial to the state's employment, the needs of firms, resources, fiscal soundness, and related development goals.
4. Expand all markets, in state, national, and international, for the state's products and services, through improved communications and promotion.
5. Encourage reservation of prime industrial sites through protective regulation or acquisition, recognizing the importance of factors such as topography and soil characteristics, availability of water and sewer service, access to transportation facilities, proximity to water bodies, and availability of labor.

6. Maintain public infrastructure, both structural (physical) and non-structural (social). Provide additional infrastructure where it is clearly demonstrated as necessary and in a manner that will protect the long-term health of the state's natural and fiscal resources.
7. Recognize Rhode Island's quality of life as an asset that improves the state's "business climate." Protect and enhance the quality of life by promoting sustainable development.
8. Recognize cultural diversity and heritage as major assets to be protected and promoted.
9. Recognize Narragansett Bay as a major economic resource.
10. Encourage initiatives to ensure a competitive and fair tax environment for all Rhode Island residents and businesses.
11. Work with local government officials to study and better understand the relationship between land use and property tax.
12. Recognize education as an essential component of economic development.
13. Encourage and promote initiatives aimed at creating competitive utility rates.
14. Enhance the affordability and reliability of the state's energy supplies by pursuing energy conservation and supporting wider use of indigenous renewable energy resources where environmentally benign and economically feasible.

### **03-03 Implementation**

A centralized planning process has been deemed necessary by the state legislature to ensure the orderly development of the state. A State Guide Plan is mandated as a means for centralizing and integrating long-range goals, policies and plans with short-range project plans and for implementing programs prepared on a decentralized basis by the agency or agencies responsible in each functional area.

The State Guide Plan's goals for the physical, economic, and social development of the state are implemented through the review of all projects and comprehensive plans for consistency with Guide Plan elements. In economic development, these include:

- EDC Conformance Reviews – applied to projects at Quonset Davisville and other industrial parks owned and operated by the R. I. Economic Development Corporation, and to projects financed by the EDC.

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – the annual process by which project proposals are solicited from municipalities, agencies, educational institutions, and nonprofit development organizations for inclusion in the CEDS on a “Priority Project List.” Successful proposals have been keyed to specific objectives and policies in the former *Economic Development Strategy*. That process will continue with the *Economic Policies and Plan*, and presents one of the most effective means of implementing the plan.
- Economic Development elements of Local Comprehensive Plans – to ensure that local efforts proceed with a sensitivity to possible impacts to neighboring communities and the state as a whole.

There is no timetable set for implementation, but the objectives and policies of the *Economic Development Policies and Plan* are expected to remain relevant through the year 2020. Implementation of economic development policies will not take place in a vacuum, but consistent with other elements of the State Guide Plan, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining “quality of life” as something possible only if development is tempered with a preservation of our environment.



Succotash Salt Marsh Management Area, South Kingstown, Rhode Island